



Selling Sexy: Mainstream Hip Hop culture's commodification of Black female sexuality

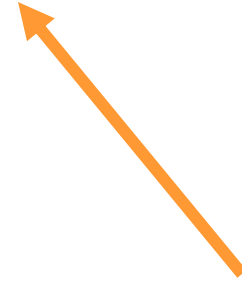
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White Womanhood

Girl Next Door/ innocent, virginal
Good Time Girl/ loose, fun
Ice Queen/ frigid, non sexual, controlled



Asian Womanhood

Dragon Lady/ emasculating, sneaky
Tiger Lilly/ passive, submissive
Mama San/ Nurturing, asexual

Latina Womanhood

La Dolorosa/ suffering one, asexual
La chismosa/ infidelity, gossipy
La mosquita muerta/ appears passive
yet acts covert



African American Womanhood



Greatest sexual risk for sexual onset, non-voluntary sex, frequency, multiple partners, older partners, unplanned pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STDs



Knowledgeable about sexual risk taking, but not encouraged to think about their own sexual desires

Sexuality is 'socially scripted' in that it is a 'part' that is learned and acted out within a social context, and different social contexts have different social scripts (Jackson 1996, 62)



Scripts shape how African American women and others formulate beliefs and interactions regarding Black female sexuality; informed by socio-historical experiences and sexual imagery



Hottentotten Venus Saarijäte • Sarah Bartman

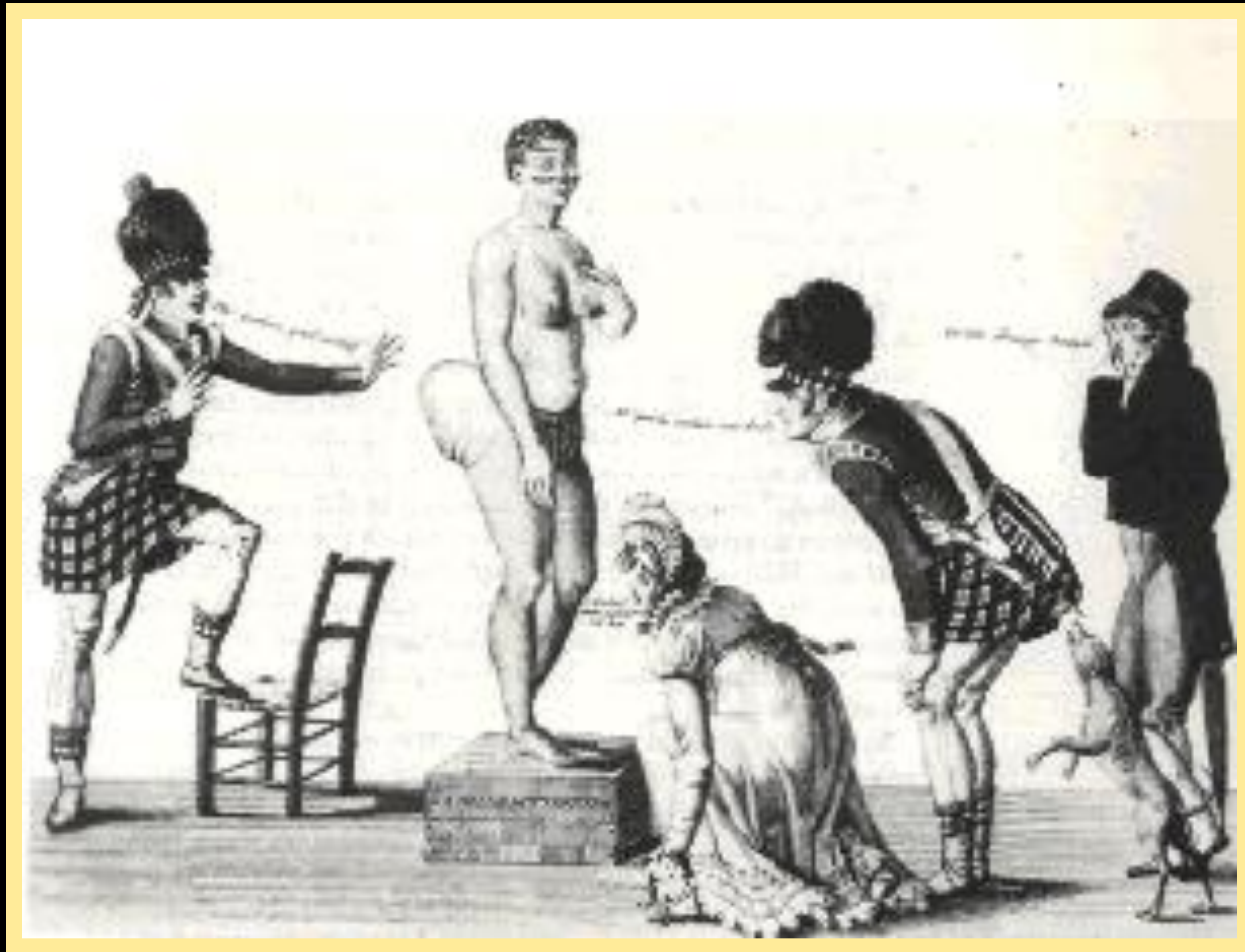




Illustration 53. Prince Roland Bonaparte (French, 1858–1924), [Three unidentified women in the Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation at the Exposition Universelle], c. 1889, from *Boschimans et Hottentots*: The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

•Three unidentified woman in the Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation at the Exposition Universelle

Photo by Prince Roland Bonapart from *Boschimans et Hottentots* (French 1858- 1924- c. 1989)

JEZEBEL

Sex to satisfy insatiable desires for white men

Fulfills masters' sexual & economic desires

Mulatto/ Half Breed;
Light skin, long hair,
shapely bodies, with
few African features



MAMMY

Asexual and Nurturing

Fulfills masters families' domestic needs

Dark skinned, large,
African features;
portrayed as
unattractive

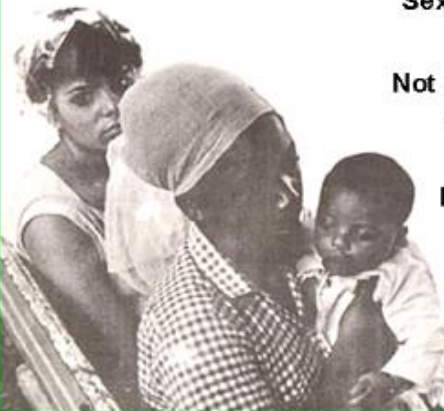


WELFARE MAMA

Sex with African American men to breed

Not useful to white culture's needs; "living off the system"

Physical appearance
undefined and
unnecessary



MATRIARCH

Sex to emasculate and control men

Not useful to white cultural needs; seen as source of African American's problems

Physical appearance
undefined and
unnecessary





Most obvious and accessible images of *young* Black womanhood today evident in African American based youth driven mainstream Hip Hop (Stephens & Phillips 2003 & 2005)

Began as urban African American cultural response to Reaganomics; since has gone through various phases via message foci, controlling bodies, and consumption/ acceptability (Phillips, Reddick & Stephens, 2005; Rose, 1994)



Early to Mid 80's Reaganomics and NYC specific socializing; Real Roxanne war; Urban Black production and consumption

Mid to late 80's Partying, safe sex, Afrocentrism, Queen Latifah & McLyte; corporate ownership but Black consumption

Early to mid 90s Gangsta & RB; greater sexual discussions; females as dancers & girl groups, corporate ownership & mainstream consumption

Mid to late 90s Growth of Dirty South Sound, increased mix international musics; diversity of women as artists but video roles move to background, corporate ownership and mainstream consumption



Karrine
"Superhead"
Steffans



Salt n' Pepa



Foxy Brown

Uncle Luke "Skywalker"
Campbell, Artist &
Producer



Today "**Bling Bling**" culture with shared white and black controlling of industry

Image of Blackness is ghetto fabulous millionaire with position of young women still male defined, even when appears empowered as greatest commodity is her sexuality

Increase in highly sexualized female imagery; overt relationships with pornography industry:

adult videos

industry figures cross over

two versions of music videos



Snoop Dogg,
Artist



Music videos and cultural images of Hip Hop originally sidebars in mass media; currently main genre of rotation on MTV and BET, while norm music in **marketing efforts** to children, teens and young adults

Music videos provide important visual cues for **selling music and creating images**; suggested that video drives mainstream Hip Hop culture more than the music itself

Women **and men** wanting to challenge operate in world defined by financial, sexual and patriarchal ideals/ beliefs; means often rearticulating values **associated** that make money and maintain status quo

Rely on gender, racial and sexual stereotypes and frameworks to cut through need for deep descriptions

Central to these portrayals rely upon the historically hyper-sexualized “**animalistic**” Black womanhood and “**hot blooded**” Latina womanhood

Camera angle for males from bottom to provide perspective of control; body partitioning focusing on sexualized aspects viewed vulgar and uncivilized in mainstream culture (buttocks, breasts, lips, hips, skin color)

Young women serve to bolster males’ masculinity as decorative objects and not empowered in own right; **sexuality** becomes women’s primary value



GANGSTA BITCH

BABY MAMA

EARTH MOTHER

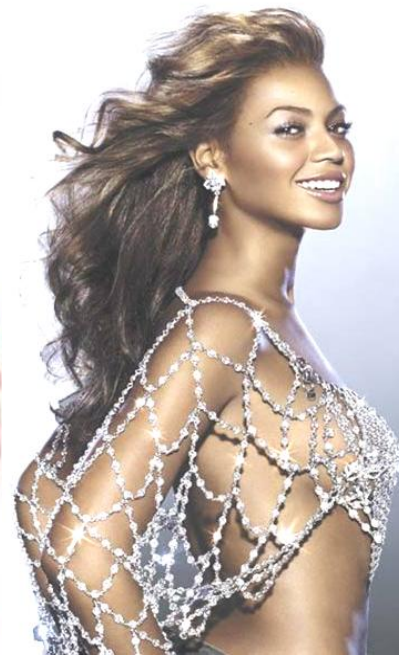
DYKES

FREAKS

DIVAS

GOLD DIGGERS

SISTER SAVIOR



From Pictures...



... to Practice



Influence on Beliefs


Stephens & Few (2005) found eight sexual scripts were recognized and given consistent meanings across age and gender groups

African American girls recreated Hip Hop imagery in their presentations via *MySpace* pages, using them as forms of self expression (Stokes, 2007)

Ward (2005) found frequent Hip Hop music video viewing associated with more traditional gender role attitudes and with assigning greater importance to specific stereotypical attributes; also expressed more traditional views about gender and sexual relationships



Melyssa Ford,
Video Dancer &
BET Host



Stephens & Few (2005) found beliefs and values regarding physical attractiveness influenced ideas about the behaviors associated sexual scripts engaged in; in turn directly informed peer and interpersonal relationships attitudes

Male relatives accepted girls' usage of Diva and Sister Savior utilization scripts as viewed as “good” and “nice” in terms of sexual behaviors

African American female adolescents viewing Hip Hop images with high levels sexual content have a negative toward condom use and strong desire to conceive (Wingood et al., 2001, 2003).

Ki Toy Johnson, Video Dancer

Pre- adolescent African American males and females believed highly sexualized scripts should expect to be victims of non- voluntary sex (Stephens & Few, 2005).

Gillum (2002) found large percentage of African American men in her sample endorsed stereotypic images of African American women; positively related to justification of violence against women

White college students evaluated personality of African American women more negatively after being watching hip hop music videos featuring songs of devoted love or sexual titillation (Gan, Zillman, & Mitrook, 1997)

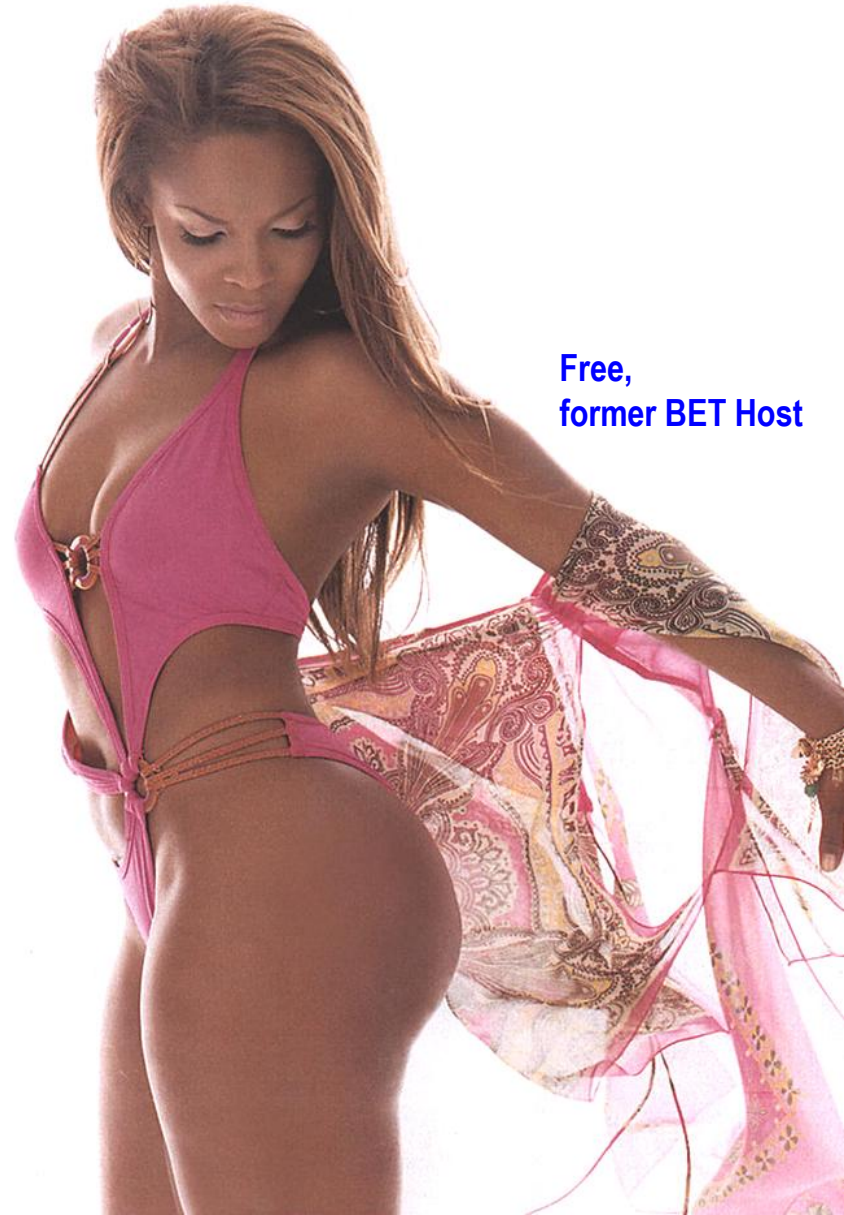
Esther Baxter,
Video Dancer



Influence on Behavior

African American female adolescents viewing media images with high of sexual content twice as likely to have multiple sex partners, more frequent sex, not use contraception, and more likely to have STD (Wingood et al., 2001, 2003).

Peterson et al. (2007) found that girls acceptance of sexual stereotypes in Hip Hop videos more likely to test positive for marijuana use, engage in binge drinking, have multiple sex partners and hold negative body images



Free,
former BET Host



Pre- adolescent African American males would use condoms with highly sexualized scripts but not necessarily others (Stephens & Few, 2005).

Lichtenstein (2004) study on HIV risk found controlling images of Black women as sexualized bodies influenced by imagery in Hip Hop culture; enacted through rape, sexual coercion, and name-calling

Interventions targeting HIV/ AIDS risk (Braithwaite, Lubin & Taylor, 2000; Yasin, 1999) and sexual violence (Bruce & Davis, 2000) reduction among African American adolescents successful when Hip Hop cultural integrated into design

Angel Lola Luv Fershgenet,
Video Dancer

Taking Responsibility: Women?

What would happen if women just decided to say no?

What is wrong with women embracing their beauty?

Few mainstream spaces that celebrate Black womanhood; argued creating a space for Black women as beautiful and new type of idealized woman

Video dancer easy industry entry; need to consider why sexuality primary source of power as recreates historical issues of selling sex



Vida Guerra,
Video Dancer

Taking Responsibility: Industry?

What came first- the chicken or the egg?

Music videos expression of what is society

Recognize multimillion dollar industry that relies heavily on meeting market needs, beliefs and desires; which songs and videos most attractive?

Recognize that it has been created as a means of mobility for marginalized youth; artists “retiring”

Women in positions of power marginalized and few willing to address gender dynamics in constructively

Is an industry, art or activism ?

Buffie da Body,
Video Dancer



Taking Responsibility: Parents?

Where are the parents? It's their job to monitor their children

Parents should be establishing values and norms about sexuality

First musical culture that has evolved without adult input or involvement, unlike musical forms in the past; some parents part of culture and reinforce

Media programming age specific targeting; parents watch television separately term of time and rooms

Parents have little knowledge of sexual experiences or do not have comprehensive discussions about sexuality (i.e. relationships)

Today parents not around or available to be involved in peer or media culture



P Diddy with mom Janice Combs



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